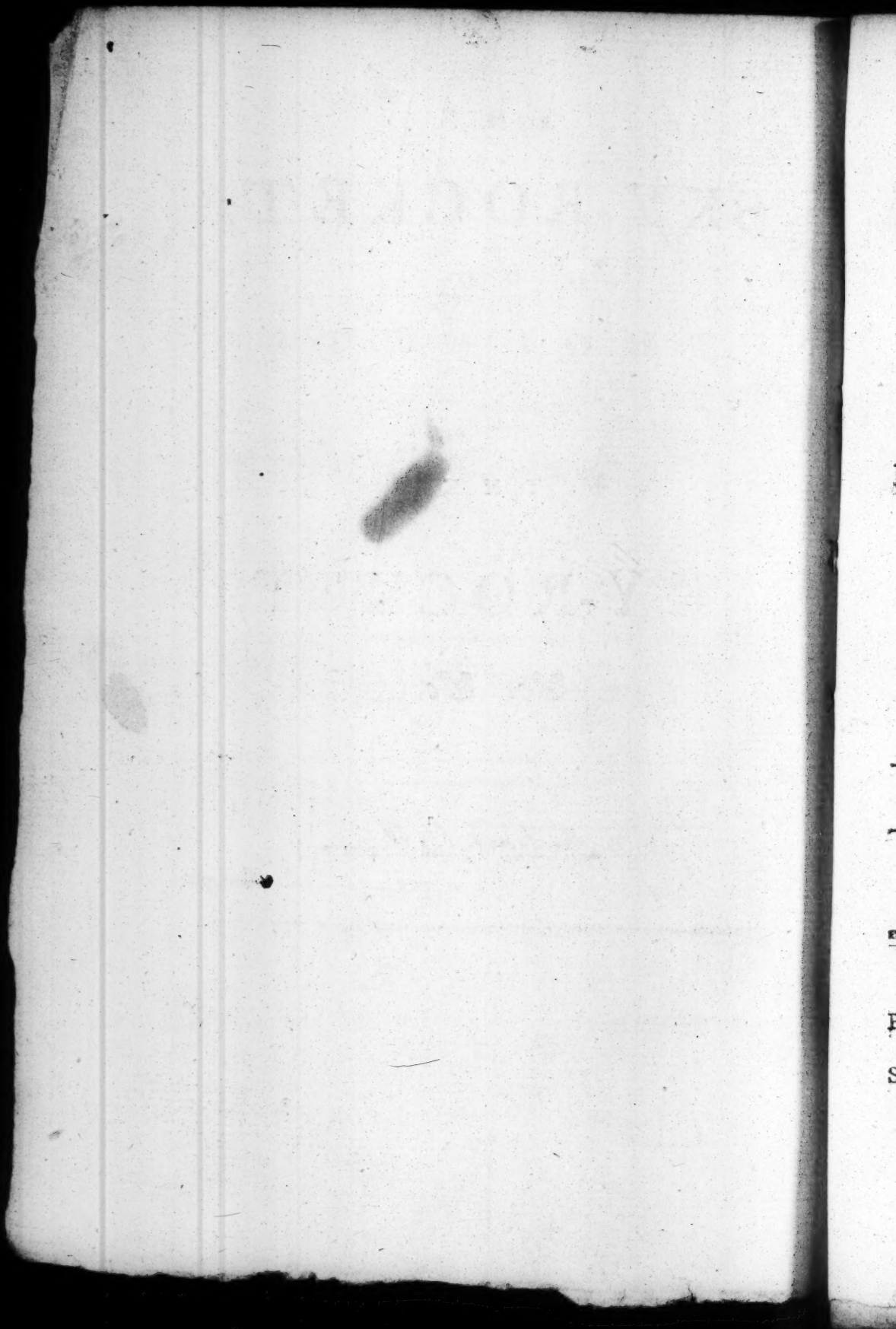


Bayley

THE
SKY-ROCKET,
&c. &c.

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THE
 SKY-ROCKET;
 OR
 THOUGHTS
 DURING THE
 EASTER RECESS OF PARLIAMENT,
 ON SEVERAL
 VERY IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,
 AND ON SEVERAL
 RECENT EVENTS.

Amica Patria, amicus Rex, magis amicus Christus.

By Richard Hile, Esq.
 Member for the County of Salop.

L O N D O N:

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Sold also by MATTHEWS, near Northumberland-House
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A R R A T A.

Page 8. line 9. after *conge d'elires* add and *trans-*
lations

Last line in the same p. for *declareing* read *declaring*.

Page 15. l. 11. for *late* read *certain*.

p. 19. l. 4. for *rebuke* r. *broadside*.

p. 20. line 9. note. for *mutatis* r. *mutatus*.

T H E

SKY-ROCKET,

&c. &c.

THOUGH it be the grand and sole *privilege* of the Commons assembled in parliament to grant supplies, to receive petitions, and to debate freely on all national questions, yet, it is the indispensable *duty* and *office* of parliament to controul the power of the crown, and to keep it within its due bounds, that it may not swallow up the rights of the people; to say to monarchy, "*hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther.*" But when-

B

ever

ever the crown has obtained so much influence as to bias the great council of the nation, then one part, and let me add, the principal part, because the greatest part of the legislature is overturned. We may just as well have no parliament at all, yea, much better, than to have such a parliament as is made a *cat's-paw* to effect those corrupt purposes, which without its aid and seeming sanction, even unlimited monarchy durst not undertake. Indeed, whenever the executive power has so much bias as to obtain but a single vote of parliament contrary to the sense of the people at large, then that nice poise and equilibrium which is the very essence and glory of the British constitution is lost, and in that instance if in no other, sovereignty tramples upon liberty, and the democratical part of the government is absorbed by the monarchical.

How

How frequently, rather how continually this was the case during the late administration, every body knows: and indeed whoever considers, *First*, how much places, contracts, promises, connections, and self-interest in a thousand other ways are apt to influence the minds and conduct of men. *Secondly*, How unequal a representation of the people there is in parliament; and how many boroughs are constantly kept in the hands of the minister, will rather wonder at those *virtuous* struggles which have lately been made in the house of commons to save the nation and to restore the constitution, than flatter himself with the persuasion that a patriot king, ruling over a free people by law, and in their hearts by affection; with a ministry equally the servants of the crown, and of the people, and at the same time the confidential friends of both, will not always be the greatest phenomenon in the world.

Again,

Again, it must be considered that the struggles of the people against the encroachments of the crown, are in the very nature of things open and visible: whereas the struggles of the crown against the people are usually secret and invisible, consequently the more dangerous. Add to this, that places and *conge d'elires* give a dead weight to the crown influence in the aristocratical part of the legislature.

Notwithstanding all these disadvantages a pleasing prospect of hope now dawns upon our view by the formation of a new ministry, who have taken the management of public affairs into their hands, and who come into office upon such a footing as no preceeding ministry (at least as a body) ever did before. As the former administration was dismissed by the voice *the independent voice* of parliament, declaring their *want of foresight* and of *ability*;

ability ; and that it was not for the interest of the country that the management of public affairs should remain any longer in their hands who had so grossly *mismanaged* those affairs, that no further confidence ought to be placed in them. I say as the *independent voice* of parliament against them obtained their resignation ; so his Majesty ever attentive to the desires of his people, and anxious to promote their happiness, has now made choice of those very men to fill every important place of trust, whom he judged would meet the wishes of his faithful commons, and of the nation in general. These men therefore know their call to office is *voce populi* ; and if they are true to the principles they profess, they will acknowledge it to be *voce Dei*.*—They will remember how solemnly they have pledged themselves to parliament (particularly upon the day when

* I mean those of them who believe that any such Being exists.

when the Earl of Surry's motion was expected) that they have no sinister motives whatever in view, that they have nothing near their hearts but the public good, totally to expel every *atom*, and to eradicate every fibre of corruption, to purge out the whole leaven of undue influence; and that

*Flectere si nequeo superos acheronta movebo,**

is a maxim unworthy any man who has a grain of honesty in his bosom. I say they will remember these declarations, and they will remember too, that they will certainly be looked upon as the touchstone and criterion of all their actions to the end of their *political* lives. We have often seen a gloomy, foggy day give place to a glympse of genial sun; suddenly the clouds have gathered again, and the evening has turned out worse than the morning. Let me not be deemed a *croaker*, especially when the nation is on tiptoe looking for the happy effects

* Mr. Burke's last speech.

effects of the late change; but I would rather be a *croaker* than a *flatterer*. yet I have no need to be thought either one or the other, if I say to every independent member of the house, including myself, for such I am and such I will be, *Cui fides vide.*—*look before you leap.* It is the known characteristic of the English nation to be violently taken with things at first. And who can wonder at the general joy that now prevails, if we consider into what a deplorable condition this nation has sunk since the beginning of Lord North's administration. Burdened by an enormous debt; oppressed by a weight of accumulated taxes on all the necessaries of life, and even on trade itself, a vigorous exertion of which could alone relieve us; torn by intestine divisions and popular discontents; surrounded by powerful enemies, without one ally to help us; *obstinately* engaged in a long unsuccessful war (I will not use the word *unjust*, because

cause every one shall judge for themselves) against those who are related to us by every tie of union, friendship and mutual interest; our treasures and finances exhausted; commerce stagnated; public credit declining; the flower of our armies cut off and defeated; our fleets (once our glory) always too late in their operations, and so much inferior to those of our foes that the valour of our commanders was thereby rendered ineffectual.

This is a very short but a very true sketch of the state of public affairs, which I need not say have been growing worse and worse every day. Can it then be wondered that the public joy is so universal upon the present change? and God forbid that I myself, both as an individual and as a member of parliament, should not bear my share in it, but I wish it to be a lasting joy, and therefore my sincere hope is that as the country gentlemen or
independent

independent part of the house, have now seen what great things they can effect by standing together as one undivided phalanx, so they will still continue to act in concert, considering measures more than men, and thereby throwing that vast weight of respectable influence into the scale of real patriotic virtue, of which we hear so much on all sides but see so little on any.

This cordial advice tendered indeed as it is with the most unfeigned deference and humility, will not be deemed impertinent by those for whom it is principally designed, if it be for no other reason than the well meant intention of him who offers it. And as to those who are lately come into office, as men of uprightness and integrity, they will be glad to draw some public advantage from every caution which may be thrown out, and will rejoice at whatever tends to investigate their motives,

motives, and to sift their conduct.—At all events, I will say, let us remember Lord Howe's late quotation of the fable of the old man, his sons, and the bundle of twigs.

I must now observe that the first question on which the late ministry began very evidently to totter (at least according to my little observation) was on the motion of Sir James Lowther, December 12, 1781. “ That it is the
 “ opinion of this house, that the war
 “ carried on in the Colonies and plantations of *North America*, has proved
 “ ineffectual, either to the protection of
 “ his Majesty's loyal subjects in the said
 “ Colonies, or for defeating the dangerous designs of our enemies.” And
 “ that it is the opinion of this house,
 “ that under the present circumstances
 “ of the country, all further attempts
 “ to reduce the revolted Colonies to obedience by force, are contrary to the
 “ true interests of this kingdom ; as
 “ tending

“ tending to weaken its efforts against
 “ it’s ancient and powerful enemies.”

The American war was become very unpopular indeed, and the nation had for near seven years been groaning under the load of it. But though every day’s experience evinced the impracticability and *madness* * of attempting the *reduction* of our revolted Colonies by force, yet from the arrangements which were made when a late new created Viscount

was

* I cannot help making use of this expression, and must own there is a print of Hogarth which I could never look at without it’s putting me in mind of the conduct of the then Ministry, with regard to the American war.

The scene is Bedlam, and there is a poor wretch attempting to discover the longitude, by drawing scores, degrees or what you please to call them, on the walls of his cell : but alas ! every line he makes drives him further and further from his object, and proves more and more his own infatuation. How is this to be accounted for but by the saying of the Poet,

There’s joy in madness none but madmen know.

led up into an higher assembly ; from the ambiguous expressions of some of the Ministry, and from the more explicit or rather *less dark* declaration of the new made Secretary of State, that in order to incline the Americans to wish for peace *we must make them feel the calamities of war* (a sentence well noticed by that very able young orator, Mr W. Pitt. I say, from these and other circumstances, there is little reason to doubt that it was not want of will but want of power in *our Governors* *, which obliged them to desist from pushing on the war into the bowels of America, as long as there was one drop of blood to be drained

* I have made use of the word *Governors* at large, because I pretend not to lay the prosecution of this unnatural war, at the door of any particular persons or *Personage* : but whether it were *He, She,* or *they*, as a very great man more than once observed in the house, the effects of it are so dreadful to this kingdom, that we are likely to feel them as long as the world itself exists.

drained out of the heart of England, or as long as a single shilling could have been borrowed, though they should have paid two shillings for the loan of one.

The issue of Sir James Lowther's motion having convinced the leaders of the then opposition, that the sense of the independent part of the house was clearly against a further carrying on of the American war, and that the country gentlemen, whether Whigs or Tories, would upon this ground be most likely to desert the Minister, took care repeatedly to bring forward the same question in substance, though couched under different words, and proposed by different persons, (and by which their strength grew in proportion as our losses increased) till they brought the matter home to the ministers themselves, as the authors of all our national calamities *.

* I cannot help remarking here that though the American war, was as one called it, the *Dulci-*

Mr Fox, I conclude, had the principal hand in this business, and most artfully I will say *most charmingly* he managed it. Much being necessary to be said on opening the motion tending to a removal of Lord Sandwich, viz. "That there had been great mismanagement in our naval affairs in the year 1781." no man of less abilities was fit to undertake it; he therefore undertook it himself, and displayed, as he always does, such profusion of accurate knowledge, such richness of idea, such perspicuity of argument, such methodical arrangement of matter, such readiness of expression, yet without *verbosity* or repetition, that no speaker on the other side was at all a match for him.

The Lord Advocate of Scotland, attempted to answer Mr Fox. But great

as nea dal Taboso of a Quixote Ministry: Yet, it has been *Nutts* in the hands of opposition to pelt the Ministry with from one side of the house to the other. Not always without an handful of dust to throw into the eyes of the gallery.

as his powers of oratory are, the answer was *but an attempt*.† And the slip he made concerning *Captain Adam Duncan*, occasioned him to receive a pretty warm ~~rebuke~~ *rejoinder* from an honorable but honest Tar, now exalted to a post which I doubt not but he will fill with honor to himself and glory to his country; and that we shall ere long be able to say (if things be not gone too far to be retrieved)

Fam fides, et pax, et Honor, Pudorque

Prisus, et neglecta redire virtus

Audet, &c. HOR.

Lord Nugent spoke on the same occasion. His speech was chiefly intended to

† I cannot help bearing this testimony in behalf of that learned Lord (who from his speech on this occasion was humourously called by Mr Dunning, now Lord Ashburton, the *naval* Lord) that if I had but twenty shillings in the world, I would give fifteen for his abilities, and four and sixpence for his *front*; but I would hardly give the other tester for his *then* principles. What they may be
now,

to prove that *misfortune* rather than *mismanagement*, was the cause of the ill success of our naval affairs. Among other expressions in vindication of the first Lord of the Admiralty, he made use of nearly the following words, "How should the earl of Sandwich know which course the French fleet would take? *He is neither saint nor angel that he should know this.*"

Now if ever pure uncorrupt truth dropped from that compliant bench on which the

now, or may be *soon*, I pretend not to decide, (great allowances must be made for a man speaking *ex officio*) but I doubt not but many among *us* as well as many others in an higher assembly, not excepting those who are clothed in *pure unspotted lawn*, will now say for themselves.

Tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis.

Non sum qualis eram.

——— *Quantum mutatis ab illo!*

In short,

Whatever king shall reign I'll still be vicar of Bray, sir.

Or otherwise,

Every new minister is sure to become a Ratcatcher.

the noble Lord then sat, it was when he made that same declaration, and though I marked the expression particularly myself, I wondered that no speaker afterwards took notice of it, for I am sure it was such an one as met the ideas of the whole house; inasmuch that had the question been put simply——“It is the opinion of this house that the first Lord of the Admiralty is *neither a saint nor an angel,*” it would have passed without any division.

It is not my design here to take any notice of the particular speeches which were made upon this or any other motion relative to the removal of the ministry: and yet I cannot help taking notice of one speech which was certainly intended for that day, but as some awkward mishap or other would have it, either the learned orator who had composed it, could not attend, or at least could not

conveniently spout it upon that particular occasion. But it was pity the speech should be lost upon that account; therefore as the learned gentleman could not bring the speech to the day, he thought it would answer the same end if he could bring the day to the speech: but I beg leave to inform him that those days on which particular questions are agitated, are not *moveable* like the present festival of Easter. It would be hard however to deny the learned gentlemen a privilege which is claimed by all the clergy throughout the land, viz. that of putting a new text to an old sermon.

This sermon or *sermo* which was an eloge upon the earl of Sandwich, from whom he had received such signal favors (and had it been deferred a few days longer till the death of his administration, might have passed for a funeral oration) the learned Gentleman sent (probably in
the

the very folios in which it made it's appearance out of his pocket in the House) to the Morning Chronicle where those who think *they cannot have too much of a good Thing*, may read it at full length.

But I have done with this noble Earl, and his Panegyrist and therefore dismiss them both from the *anvil*. Happy would it have been for the Nation if the former had been long ago dismissed from the *Anchor*.

Mr. Fox wisely considered that having been himself the avowed Champion of opposition, if he in his own name brought forward all the questions tending to the removal of the Ministry, it would have been immediately said "the Country Gentlemen suffered themselves to be led by the nose by Charles Fox, whilst he himself wanted nothing but the *loaves and fishes*". He therefore judged very properly that this *ousting* business would come with much greater weight

from some other quarter than from himself *; accordingly the matter was undertaken first by Sir John Rous and afterwards by the Earl of Surry, both highly respectable characters, and educated in tory principles. Upon the motion of the former, the Ministry had only a majority of *Nine*: and had the motion of Lord Surry been debated, and a division taken place, there is no doubt but the Minister would have been left in a minority; foreseeing which, he chose to evade the disgraceful situation by a sudden and *unparliamentary* motion of adjournment, accompanied

* Truly great and *bien apropos* to what Mr Adam had just been urging with a degree of warmth, of a Placeman's speech having the same weight as that of an independent man, was the apology of Mr Fox for rising before Sir Edward Astley, (who then sat next to him) when he confessed that he was far from thinking any thing he could say, would have the same authority with that of his *honourable friend*, the house knowing the predicament in which he stood. "*There is no harm,*" added he, *in speaking ill of one's self, &c.*"

accompanied by a declaration, *that his Majesty's Ministers were no more.*

From what I have hitherto said I flatter myself it will be allowed that I have attended with some small degree of precision to every thing that has passed upon the late important business of Parliament, and indeed I believe few Members paid a stricter regard to the debates which passed upon the most interesting motions, no part of which *wilfully* escaped me. I must confess, however, that once or twice, not being accustomed to midnight hours, I caught myself snoring an harmonious *duett*, with a certain noble Lord in a blue ribbon; though it appeared in the division afterwards that we were not quite so much in concert when we were awake as when we were asleep, and that if our noses were at perfect unison, our voices were at absolute discord.

Before I take my leave of the late ministry, I must observe that it was as unfortunate for them as it was otherwise for their successors that they made their *exit* just after the proposal of the new taxes.—Of these taxes I shall beg to speak a little, but that I may not be tedious I shall confine myself to that which I think by far the worst of them: and to that which I think by far the best of them.

We will begin with the former, and leave the latter *pour la bonne bouche*.

Had those who have lately gone out of office wished to end their ministerial career by one of the most unpopular actions that ever was done, they could not have accomplished that with more effectually than by their attempt to tax goods and merchandise sent by land or water carriage, but especially the former. It is as Mr. Fox [well observed *a tax upon the only free trade*

*trade that is left among us**, and is oppressive even to a degree of cruelty; and I know that petitions upon petitions will be sent up against it from all quarters, should it be suffered to go on in the house; but this I am persuaded will never be the case.

1st. Because the new administration finding how exceedingly averse the nation in general is to this tax will never go on with a measure so likely to alienate the minds of the people from them at this critical juncture, when they *would* and *do* wish to do all in their power to conciliate their affections.

2dly. Mr. Fox himself having spoken against this tax in the house (I mean the land carriage more particularly) and afterwards having requested his friends in the lobby, when there was a division upon

C 4

Sir

* I do not exactly recollect his very words, but to the best of my remembrance this was his sentiment.

Sir John Rous's motion to attend in the house when that bill should be read, can never after this, consent to let it be adopted, upon which account I shall spend no more time in shewing it's destructive and baneful tendency.

It may be said, "it is an easy matter to find fault with the taxes, but not so easy to find others in their stead. Taxes we must have, and every friend to the public should now chearfully join in the most vigorous efforts to strengthen the hands of the new administration, who unanimously wish to make every burden as light as possible.

All this I sincerely allow, yet tax any thing or every thing but trade and industry itself†. For instance tax all unmarried men

† I must here except *Maid Servants* which I believe was once thought of. And that for the following reasons.

1st. From

above such an age, (I am perfectly liberal in the proposal, being *perhaps* myself in that

1st. From the difficulty of defining who ARE *Maid Servants*. How shall we draw the line between chamber maids and maids of the bed-chamber. Between waiting maids, and maids in waiting, or maids of honor? These surely should be taxed according to the value of their places. But 2^{dly}. The grand objection to this tax is that it will greatly increase the horrid evils of seduction and prostitution. For how few trades can women go to already except those of milliners and mantua-makers? And I believe in general that those who are apprenticed to the former, seldom get very high in virtue's School. but if this tax were to take place, a truly modest woman would be a *rara avis* indeed. I would therefore humbly propose in such case that what follows should stand at the beginning of the Bill.

“ WHEREAS the morals of the rising generation are not yet sufficiently corrupt, and Whereas the number of common prostitutes throughout this nation are still found inadequate to supply the demands of the clergy and laity. Be it therefore enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the consent of the Lords temporal and *Spiritual*, and the Commons, &c. &c. That a tax be laid on every maid servant in such and such a capacity, whereby

that number) but do not tax unmarried women, because I suppose the generality of them cannot help being so. Some may say if such a tax should be adopted, the language of many men to their wives would soon be, Oh ! that I had paid the tax! and that others will say they find a wife the heaviest of all taxes—but, *spero meliora*.—2dly. Tax all livings and benefices above such a value.—3dly. Tax deans and chapters, and bishopricks, and all idle non-resident clergy, who mind the

whereby it is presumed the said inconvenience will be in great measure prevented, as many women who are now in service, will upon their discharge be under the necessity of going immediately upon the town, and many others who in future would have been provided for in decent families will be under a like necessity of giving themselves up to prostitution.”

“ And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that every maid servant so becoming prostitute before the 24th day of June next, shall be obliged and is hereby required to take out a licence of prostitution from the treasury in form and manner as Whore's

the fleece more than the flock, and who to the sad triumph of infidelity,

"Leave to tatter'd crape the drudgery of prayer."

4thly. Tax every print which is sold at the picture-shops, by having them all stamped in proportion to their price. This will probably bring in something considerable, and if it does not, it will at least lessen the number of print-shops, every one of which in the more public streets, is a sort of nuisance, by stopping idle gazers, to feed their eyes and fancies with the most wanton exhibitions. 5thly. Tax all who needlessly travel on the Lord's day.—6thly. Tax all gaming

Whore's licences are granted by *his Holiness* at Rome. For which licence so granted each Whore shall pay the sum of 13s. and 4d. all and every part of which sums are to be accounted for by the pay master General."

Far be it from me thus to mention the horrid evil of prostitution as if I had not the deepest sense of its malignant nature, but I thought by setting it in this point of view it was more likely to strike the mind.

gaming-houses; and tax doubly and trebly those murderers of peace, health, time, and credit, cards and dice.—7thly, Follow Sir Edward Afley's advice and tax friseurs; it matters not if the burden *do* fall on the frisee.—8thly. Tax every plate that is run for at Newmarket or elsewhere. Tax snuff, and perfumery of all sorts.—In short, tax the vices, follies and luxuries of mankind to the utmost; but spare trade and commerce, spare industry, and as much as possible, spare the poor.

I am now naturally led to what I think one of the best taxes that ever was proposed—and no doubt almost every reader has prejudged me, by saying, “Aye, “you mean the tax on playhouses and “public diversions.”

Most cordially I confess the charge; and not one argument have I seen or heard against it, but what confirms me in my opinion. For, *First*, *Waving* the evil

evil and corrupt tendency of the stage, and the dreadful evils done by it to the morals of thousands, no one is compelled to pay a farthing a year to this tax; so that it is entirely a *voluntary* tax. 2dly. It takes no more from any individual than what he himself judges he can very well spare, nay, it actually takes nothing but what is deemed superfluous after all the conveniencies of life are supplied. 3dly. It neither affects the poor, nor trade, nor any of the necessities of life. 4thly. If it decreases the number of players and of such as exhibit at different places of diversion (which I much doubt) it may be the happy means of making those seek to get a livelihood in a useful, creditable way, who now live as drones upon the public. Upon the whole, if we except all those who are in some degree or other interested to exclaim against this tax, and those who had rather spend their time and money at play-houses

houses, &c. &c. than employ them to any better purposes; I hope I may safely say there is not a man of sound sense and of a real benevolent disposition to be met with, but upon calmly weighing the arguments, will acquiesce in the propriety, usefulness, and even expediency of this tax on public diversions, which I trust will be extended throughout England, as well as in the metropolis.

What a scandal would it have been even to heathen Rome, what demonstration of the decay of her glory, what evidence of the corruption of her manners; what direful proof that all attention to the public welfare was absorbed by luxury and effeminacy; if the great business of the senate had ever been postponed or stood still, in order that the senators themselves might attend at the theatre to see some foreigner cut capers, and pay their tribute of money and praise

to

to his excellencies.—Yet was not this actually done last year at the time of Monsieur Vestris's benefit? Blush England! Blush Christian protestant nation!

——— *Pudet hæc opprobria nobis
Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli.*

Mr. Burke, with a proper tincture of wit, satire, and manly courage, mentioned the above circumstance in the house of commons at the time.—But the name of *THE Vestris* * was too dear to be thus brought up with impunity, for the next day, *ignorance* and *impudence* joined their united forces to ridicule Mr. Burke in some of the public papers.

It

* Rather than not affect to be genteel, numbers of people will venture to expose their own folly; hence *THE Vestris*. Now the articles *il* and *la* before an Italian proper name may, without much absurdity, be translated by the word *the*, because agreeable to the idiom of that language; but it is downright nonsense to place them before a French name.—So that *THE Vestris* is *THE* quintessence of *ignorance* and *affectation*.

Is it not then time, high time, that these sort of places should be taxed towards the exigencies of the state, when, notwithstanding the empire is crumbling into ruins, we are so lost to all feeling of our own, and to the miseries of our fellow-creatures, that we can annually pay as much to the support of French and Italian singers and dancers, whether *the* this, or *the* that, or *the* other, as would relieve thousands of poor, sick, industrious families, who are destitute of all the necessaries of life; and as would fit out several ships of the line for the public service. †

Having

† When these taxes were first proposed, I had some thoughts of mentioning to the house in person, a part of what I have now put to paper concerning them. But I confess, that whenever I rise to speak before that learned and judicious assembly (for I am certain that the body of them are men of solid sense and liberal education, and that though I have hitherto been indulged with a candor and attention which fills me with shame) I am always seized with such

HAVING now briefly touched on the
use and duty of parliament ; having made
 some

such a degree of terror and agitation as causes me
 to lose my whole chain of ideas as well as arrange-
 ment of my words ; and therefore, *in futuro*, I be-
 lieve it may be my best way to be silent ; at least I
 will claim no other privilege than that of an ass or
 a calf stung by a gadfly, if perchance any thing
 should suddenly rouse me up to *bray* or *bellow* a
 little in my own poor tone, for my country's good.

It is but a short while ago I was remarking to a
 friend, that there are a few lines in Pope's version
 of the Satires of Horace, which, if I could but re-
 verse, I should never be afraid of rising to speak
 before the house.—The words are these :

“ *There liv'd in primo Georgii they record,*

“ *A worthy member (no small fool) a lord,*

“ *Who tho' the house was up, delighted sat,*

“ *Heard, noted, answered as in full debate.*”

Now could I directly change the sentiment, and
 fancy the house empty when it is full, I could
 speak my mind to the bare walls without dismay ;
 and I doubt not but numbers of my respectable
 brethren find the case so much the same with them-
 selves, that if they were to rise up they could get
 no farther than the great Mr. Addison's “ *I con-*
 “ *ceive,*” who though he rose three times with those

Some animadversions on the present change of ministry, and on the most important motions which have lately been debated in the house; and having taken the liberty to give my opinion very freely on two of the proposed taxes, I shall bring this piece to a conclusion, with a concise view of the state of religion among us, both in and out of the house of Commons.

THE religion of the house of Commons! says one. Would I speak of that which has no existence?—Let us not be too severe: at the same time let us not be afraid to speak the truth, and to speak out too.

We will divide the house upon this point into three classes,

First,

words, yet as one near him observed, “*after having thrice conceived, brought forth nothing.*” From whence I conclude, that the silent part of the house is perhaps not the less sensible part of the house.

First, Those who pay no credit at all to Christianity.

Secondly, Those who give their assent to the truth of Christianity and yet live in direct opposition to it.

Thirdly, Those who both believe and practice Christianity.

Which ever be the most numerous of these classes, none will deny that the last is by far the least.

Permit me to say a few words to the two first of these classes.

First, to those who pay no credit at all to Christianity.

You think yourselves the only men of sense and reason ; and yet you resist such evidence as neither sense nor reason (if not blinded by passion and prejudice) can possibly withstand.

See before your eyes a standing miracle in the present state of the Jewish nation ; preserved as they are, (and as it was foretold they should be so many hundred years before their dispersion) a distinct people, yet scattered over the face of the whole earth : all other great and powerful nations, the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian and Roman empires, among which they have been scattered, come to an end and destroyed ; yet this people still remaining just in the same state, neither increasing nor diminishing in their numbers, though without king, or governors, without armies, or without any country of their own.—View them keeping in their hands and reverencing those very prophecies which foretel their obstinacy and their rejection of the Messiah, and every minute particular which has ever befallen them as a nation, and which shall befall them till the end of time.

Again

Again, Consider some of the particular prophecies relative to the Messiah himself.—If the old Testament prophecies were an imposture, would the utterers of them have foretold such events as in future ages were never likely to come to pass? especially would a succession of men, and those of uncorrupt lives, despising all human honors and all the comforts of life, for several hundred years, have followed one another in foretelling such strange improbabilities? They could gain no credit by such predictions whilst they lived, and had they not been fully assured of the truth of them, instead of being cunning designing men, they must have been fools indeed, if they had supposed they ever could have been accomplished. For had they been false, in order to make them *appear* true, a distinguished person must come into the world, of a particular tribe, of a parti-

cular family, and at a particular time; must live a life of poverty and contempt, and at last suffer the most ignominious death as a malefactor. Such a person did appear, and did accomplish in the fullest manner all the prophecies concerning him. And is it not as unlikely that any one would have done this in order to save the reputation of the prophets, as that the prophets themselves would have foretold the various circumstances of his whole life and death, upon the random prospect that some deceiver would at the exact time foretold, and in every other respect suited to their prophecies, start up and rather suffer the most cruel tortures, than that one tittle of what they had said, should not be verified.

If the propagation of the gospel by a few illiterate fishermen have nothing wonderful in it, consider the character of St Paul, a man of learning and of liberal

beral education, a strict moralist, by profession a Jew, and a violent enemy of the Christian religion. What but the most thorough persuasion of the truth of the cause in which he was engaged, could incline him to preach that faith which once he destroyed, to suffer bonds and imprisonment, cold and nakedness, boldly to meet perils of every kind, and to bear witness to the name of Jesus Christ, before kings and emperors, Jews and Gentiles?

If the example of the apostle Paul do not force sufficient conviction upon your mind, consider the character of the traitor Judas. He was an apostle also, and must have been in the secret if Christ had been an impostor, and his apostles partakers of the deceit; yet conscious of his guilt, he confessed to the high priest that he had betrayed the innocent blood, threw down the money with which he

had been bribed, and went out and hanged himself.

Wonderful indeed is that prophecy of Zechariah, so long a time before the event, preserved in the hands of the Jews without a possibility of it's being interpolated, that such a character as Judas should arise, that he should betray his master for thirty pieces of silver, and that with those thirty pieces of silver, the potters field should be bought. Had Zechariah been a deceiver, could he have imagined that so singular and so particular a prediction in which a potter and his field, the chief priests, those enemies of Christianity, as well as Judas himself, must all have been concerned, was ever likely to be accomplished, when in order to that accomplishment, the man who was the principal actor in it, must be branded as a traitor as long as the world exists, and

and hang himself in support of what he knew to be an errant lie. Yet such a character as Judas did appear, and every thing which was foretold of him, both by Zechariah and David, and lastly, by Christ himself, literally came to pass.

But I say no more on this subject, as I believe what I have said is rather held forth in a new point of view; and as I am fully persuaded that if any man lives and dies an infidel, it is not for want of evidence, but for want of a candid search after truth.

A few words only to such as profess to believe the doctrines of Christianity, and yet live in direct opposition to them.

If any persons whatsoever will be condemned out of their own mouths, it will certainly be such as profess that they believe in Christ, and yet in works deny

ny him; and indeed the infatuation of confessing that there is salvation in his name, and yet living in open rebellion against him, or treating him with that indifference as if he were a mere cypher, is so very glaring, that it is to be accounted for only from the principle of human nature being totally corrupt or fallen. But surely the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon shall rise up in judgment against persons of this character; and though they may be ready to profess their faith in him, even at the great day, yet he will say unto them before an assembled world "Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity."

Upon the whole, as an assembly of senators, at least *professing* Christianity (for the religion of Jesus Christ has never yet been formally excluded by vote) is not inconsistency stamped upon all our proceedings?—To instance only in one particular:

We

We have an excellent custom, instituted by our forefathers, viz. that of beginning all our public business with prayer. But here our worthy Speaker acts more than *officially*, for he is an absolute *plenipotentiary*; since whatever blessings or benefits are supposed to be derived to the great assembly of the nation, whatever transactions are carried on betwixt heaven and earth, or whatever is asked from the Majesty on High, is wholly left *to the chair*, as it frequently happens that not one single member is present to *second the address to the throne of grace*. So that Dean Swift's *Dearly beloved Roger*, with a very small variation, would well suit our daily service in the House of Commons.—Whatever business is supposed to be of consequence, that which relates to eternity is postponed or adjourned, *sine die*. Insomuch that if a member comes to the door of the House during the time of prayer, he is generally
accosted

accosted with " Sir, or my Lord, the
 " speaker is going to prayers, or the
 " speaker is *at* prayers ;" and the answer
 generally returned by his lordship or the
 honorable gentleman, is " very well Mr.
 " Pearson, then I will walk about a little
 " till prayers are over."

I would not from hence be thought
 to infer that a mere attendance on the
 prayers without feeling or devotion, can
 profit any man ; on the contrary, it on-
 ly adds to the farce and mockery of re-
 religion, which farce and mockery still
 subsist, though religion itself have taken
 it's flight into some unknown region.

Of a day indeed in which some inter-
 esting debate is expected, perhaps forty
 or fifty members are assembled before,
 and whilst the church service is reading.
 And what are they assembled for? to
 write their names and take their places.

And

And what is going on whilst we are supposed to be intreating the divine blessing on our endeavours that " peace and " happiness, truth and justice, religion " and piety, may be established among " us." Every thing *but praying*. One " reading a petition, another a bill, a third a report, a fourth whispering to his neighbour, &c. &c.

And whether matters are much mended in a higher assembly, though the business be performed by a lord *spiritual*, let those judge who have ever been witnesses.

Excellent as this institution of beginning our national business with prayer is, yet I fear that if it had not been long instituted by custom, and that if any member were now to get up and make a motion for it's introduction, he would be thought a more fit object for a cell in Bedlam, than for a seat in St. Stephen's chapel,

chapel, especially if he were to preface it with only such plain words as are necessarily included in every prayer which is offered up, and in the very design of the institution itself.—We will suppose the motion to run as follows, and we will also suppose the mover to be either the Hon. C——s F-x, or E——d G——n, Esq. the learned author of the decline of the Roman empire.

THE MOTION.

Mr. Speaker,

“ I beg to move this honourable
 “ house, that in this alarming, criti-
 “ cal state of public affairs, and un-
 “ der the deepest sense of the insuffici-
 “ ency of our own wisdom to guide us,
 “ and of our own strength to defend us,
 “ we may daily and unanimously join
 “ heart and voice in imploring God’s
 “ gracious help and protection through
 “ his son Jesus Christ ; and that a chap-
 “ lain

"Iain be appointed by this honourable
"house, for that purpose."

Methinks I hear the cry of Order, Order, Order! from all parts of the house. Some laughing, some asking if Mr. F-x and Mr. G——n are turned methodists. Some saying this might have done well enough in the praying times of puritanism, but it will never do for our days, &c. &c. &c. Yet there is nothing at all in this motion, but what we all tacitly accede to, if we mean any thing at all by our prayers; and if there ever was any reason whatever in the institution itself, it must be *that*, and only *that* which is contained in the above motion.

I find from our journals, that not many years ago, there was an order of the house, that if any member was not at prayers, he should forfeit one shilling; and if this fine were now to be levied
upon

upon every absentee, it would bring in a very considerable revenue. But it is much to be lamented that there is often a full hour between the time of prayer and the speaker's taking the chair, owing to there not being a sufficient number of members to make a house, which is a great bar and inconvenience to such as would otherwise always wish to attend prayers, but now can *not*.

I will now run the risk of being deemed a fanatic for supposing,

1st. That a minister of state *may possibly* have a soul.

2dly. For assuring the new ministry, that though I pretend not to say how fervently and how frequently they themselves have prayed for God's blessing on their councils, since they came into office, yet I am certain many excellent Christians
have

have been praying for them, not only in their congregations but in their closets and families.

In our debates we have frequent appeals to the statute law, to the common law, to the law of nature, and to the law of nations ; but how seldom do we appeal to the law of God to determine our differences, though by our very profession as Christians we avow ourselves to be guided by it ! Had this been done only in the single instance of the debate whether the American prisoners (being considered as rebels) were to be put on the same footing as to their diet with the French prisoners, an apostle would soon have settled the difference. “ If thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink.” But if God were to treat all who are living as *rebels* against him as some among us were for treating the American prisoners, many a *protuberant paunch* would be brought
E down,

down, and many a well-clothed back would shiver with cold and nakedness.

Whether the voice of the people be in general the voice of their representatives, shall not here be discussed, but if we could suppose the religion of the people was delegated to their representatives, who will not say that Christianity is at a very low ebb indeed ?

Truth, sad, awful truth, must be spoken. We are a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, fast bound with the chain of wickedness; and yet laden as we are, we feel not our burden; and bound as we are, we take pleasure in our chains. From the highest to the lowest order of men, there is a total forgetfulness of God, a contempt of real religion and seriousness.—We have forsaken God, and God seems to have given us up to that spirit of slumber which overspread the

the Jewish nation before its total overthrow by the Romans ; and our guilt is so much greater than theirs, in proportion as our blessings and privileges are greater.

But among all our crying national sins I must not omit to mention particularly our dreadful profanation of the Lord's day ; a sin always marked under the Jewish dispensation by God's peculiar displeasure ; and yet in this Christian nation it is the day of all others in which he is most signally dishonored, since I may venture to affirm there is more idle visiting, unnecessary travelling, gluttonous feasting, and trifling dissipation on that day than on all the other six days of the week ; not to mention that there is now a public news paper printed and hawked about every Sunday morning ; and that machines, diligences, &c. are openly and constantly advertised to set out on that day.

Amidst all the din of war, and the cries of the nation for peace, who (especially among the great) laments his being in a state of war and enmity against God? Who puts in his claim for the blessings of the Prince of Peace, freely offered us in the Gospel?

In how few families of rank is the word of God conscientiously read, and the children and servants called in to daily prayers? Nay, is not even the old decent custom of asking a blessing on our food in general laid aside?—Among ladies of rank and quality, for one who has lately been engaged in reading any book with reverence and attention, which is likely to promote her spiritual welfare, may we not without any flagrant breach of charity, suppose that fifty have been employed in reading Lady Worsley's trial *con gran gusto**. Where are the ministers of Christ

to

* I have before mentioned the expediency of taxing prints exposed to sale; and I suppose nobody will deny but it would have been very proper and

no

to be found, who shew more regard to the value of immortal souls than to the value of their tithes and glebe! alas! it is with the Priest as it is with the People, we have all corrupted our way, and without speedy repentance and reformation, there is no doubt but the judgments of a long-suffering God will be poured out upon us to the uttermost.

For my own part I pretend to no prophetic spirit, but from God's dealings with other nations, particularly that of the Jews, and from the scripture signs of the present times, I firmly believe we
are

no great check on the arts and sciences, if there had been at least a twopenny stamp on all the new prints where Lady W——y is exhibited stark naked in the Bath, with a certain officer elevated on a certain late Privy Counsellor's shoulders, in order to feast his eyes with the sight: tho' as the said officer only paid one shilling for the original, perhaps eight pence would be thought quite too much for the representative. Well indeed may monthly reviewers cry out, O tempora! O mores!

are at the eve of some great event, which will make us feel both nationally and individually, how evil and how bitter a thing it is to have departed from the living God.

“ Be wise now therefore, O ye kings :
 “ be learned ye that are judges of the
 “ earth.

“ Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice
 “ unto him with reverence.

“ Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and
 “ so ye perish from the right way : if his
 “ wrath be kindled (yea, but a little) bles-
 “ sed are all they that put their trust in
 “ him.”

Psalms ii: 10, 11, 12.

T H E E N D.

Erratum omitted, p. 55 l. 14, for *gluttenous* read *gluttenous*.